DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 347 581 CS 507 821

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TITLE Dimensions of Intimacy: The Interrelationships between Gender and Listening.
PUB DATE Mar 92
NOTE 22p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Listening Association (13th, Seattle, WA, March 4-8, 1992).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Information Analyses (070)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Communication Research; Cultural Context; *Interpersonal Communication; *Intimacy; *Listening; *Listening Habits; Literature Reviews; *Sex Differences
IDENTIFIERS *Communication Behavior; *Communication Strategies

ABSTRACT

Although psychologists, sociologists, family scientists and communication experts are making important contributions to the study of personal relationships, discussion of the gender differences that often create barriers to intimacy, and how these differences are reflected in the communication process, is notably absent from much of this work. While these differences are alluded to repeatedly, nowhere is the connection directly made between intimacy and the listening behavior of women and men. Integrating the salient aspects of listening (knowledge through self-disclosure, interdependence, trust, reciprocated commitment, and communication) with factors that affect the quality of intimate relationships between men and women can help to fill this absence. Such factors include: gender identity in listening and speaking roles, and expression and interpretation of listening in intimate relationships. Hopefully, such understanding will contribute to the knowledge of the concept of intimacy in the culture and will facilitate razing the barriers to intimate relationships that are a product of cultural expectations. Three listening strategies which are connected to the concept of intimacy are (1) self-concept and listening to others; (2) learning the listening strategies of the other; and (3) serving as listening role models. (Fifty references are attached.) (Author/PRA)

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DIMENSIONS OF INTIMACY: THE INTERRELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN GENDER AND LISTENING

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DIMENSIONS OF INTIMACY: THE INTERRELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN GENDER AND LISTENING

ABSTRACT

In the introduction to their text on intimate relationships, Perlman and Duck (1987, p. 9) note that psychologists, sociologists, family scientists and communication experts "are all making important contributions" to the study of personal relationships, thereby reflecting the recent multi-disciplinary aspect of this field. However, in many important works on intimacy and intimate relationships, the gender differences that often create barriers to intimacy, and how these differences are reflected in the communication process, have, until recently, been notably absent.[1] While alluded to repeatedly, nowhere, in fact, is the connection directly made between intimacy and the listening behavior of women and men. This paper, therefore, attempts to fill this absence by integrating into the literature on intimacy the salient aspects of listening that affect the quality of intimate relationships between women and men.[2] Hopefully, such understanding will contribute to our knowledge of the concept of intimacy in our culture and will facilitate razing the barriers to intimate relationships that are a product of cultural expectations.

INTRODUCTION

Ulrich Weisstein, in his work on literary theory, points out that the durability of legendary themes and heroes is related directly to the fact that these heroes and themes reflect our own lives: "In every mind devoted to justice," he observes, "there is an Antigone.... These heroes are in us, and we in them: they partake of our lives, and we see ourselves reflected in their shapes.... Our myths and our legendary themes are our polyvalence; they are the indices of humanity, the ideal forms of the tragic destiny, the human condition" (1968, p. 131).

If these heroes reflect our lives, an interesting image emerges when we consider the relationship between Paul Valéry's heroes, Faust and Luste, as they strive toward an intimate relationship. Faust, the protagonist, embodies the

intellect. Luste, the play's heroine, represents the heart. Although the two characters struggle for closeness, they remain uncertain about their own feelings and about their relationship. Critic Kurt Weinberg observes, "They need one another as interpreters, and as refracting mirrors that reflect one upon another with a certain degree of distortion" (1976, p. 27). The point is, these characters never are able to realize their love. They never are able to achieve the intimacy they desire, for they are so staunchly grounded in their male/female identity. This groundedness prevents the protagonists from ever fully listening to the cues of the other. Every time Luste is apart from Faust and is filled with the physical stirrings he arouses in her, she endeavors to intellectualize her feelings. This intellectual process imposed on a woman who represents pure feelings fails to illuminate and prevents her from fully understanding herself. In the case of Faust, every time he is with Luste, he is unable to maintain the intellectual process because of the physical stirrings she arouses in him. Emotions imposed on a man who represents pure intellect thwart his mental exercise and prevent him from completing the work that would define himself.

Luste tries to display Faust's intellect and fails. She fails, in part, because Faust does not discern her cues. Faust attempts to express the emotions so much a part of Luste. He, too, fails, in part because Luste is unable to interpret accurately his actions. The image of the two protagonists as they interact throughout the play is that of a dance: one, however, that is out-of-step. Yet the message conveyed by the heroes' circumstance is one that can be heeded today: To remain in the purely mental plane is stultifying. It does not illuminate. To remain in the purely emotional plane of feeling is debilitating, and equally cannot illuminate without the seeds of understanding. While Faust brings Luste to the point of wanting to understand herself through his intellectual example, Luste, through her physical presence, brings Faust to the point of wanting to live.

The symbol of the dance not quite in sync is a metaphor for many who write about intimacy. Harriet Goldhor Lerner (1989) entitles her book The Dance of Intimacy yet the dance she describes is not one that flows. Lillian Rubin, in her work Intimate Strangers, which in itself reflects a contradictory image, calls intimacy among married couples an "approach-avoidance dance" (1983, p. 65). Intimate relationships are fraught with difficulties. Many of these differences are embedded in the different styles of women's and men's listening behavior.

This paper addresses these differences in the context of recent research on intimacy, explores how many barriers to intimate relationships stem from the ways in which women and men are encouraged to express listening in their verbal and nonverbal communication, and concludes by presenting ways to diminish some of these barriers. While Faust and Luste as literary figures may have represented the epitome of intellect and emotion, as our culture has begun to change, we see changes emerging in our expectations for gendered communication. As the boundaries for acceptable communication for women and men are altered, these changes, hopefully, will help blur the lines that separate man and woman; Faust and Luste.

INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS: DEFINITIONS AND TRAITS

The study of intimacy began around the turn of the century with the writing of Georg Simmel (see Perlman and Fehr, 1987). Sustained research in the area, however, did not emerge fully until the late 1960's when self-disclosure -- especially for men -- became acceptable (Perlman and Fehr, 1987), and when researchers linked physical well-being to positive intimate bonds (Brown and Harris, 1978; Goldberg, 1976; Klinger, 1977; Perlman and Fehr, 1987; Reis, 1984).

The term intimacy stems from the Latin word intimus, meaning 'inner' or 'innermost.' Definitions of the term focus on various aspects of the word. Both Chelune et al. (1984, p. 14), and Hatfield (1984, p. 208), view intimacy as a process by which individuals come to know themselves and others. Acitelli and Duck (1987, p. 297) emphasize the impact of culture on how we come to define and express feelings of intimacy, although they recognize that actual rules are not variant, but vary according to the relationship (e.g., in the context of friendships, familial ties, courtship behavior, marital bonds, etc.). And, for one of Rubin's interviewees, the mask symbolizes the distinction between ordinary and intimate relationships. For him, intimacy is "putting aside the masks we wear in the rest of our lives" (1983, p. 68).

Regardless of the variations in the definitions, scholars who study intimacy concur that to achieve the closeness inherent in intimate bonds, five relational characteristics are required. Yet, developing these traits may be another matter, for each trait engenders risk, and the fear of risk can impose potent barriers to forming intimate relations. Several of these fears stem from prescribed cultural norms for women's and men's behavior. We now examine the five traits basic to forming close ties, and the corresponding fear that may serve as barriers to actualizing these ties.

1. KNOWLEDGE THROUGH SELF-DISCLOSURE

Self-knowledge and the disclosure of one's self to another are fundamental dimensions of intimacy. Steve Duck, in fact, regards the "proper and dexterous control of self-disclosure, that is, the revelation of personal layers of one's self" as the essential aspect of relationships (1991, p. 75). However, the fear of exposing one's self is a compelling impediment to self-revelation. No one enjoys being regarded negatively. Yet many individuals equate disclosing fears with weakness, or, with what Jourard terms being "psychologically naked" (1971, p. 39). Several writers point to this fear as particularly problematic for men. Hatfield (1984) for example, avers that the expectation for men to be in control of their thoughts and feelings is a daunting

limitation, while women, who are encouraged to be expressive and emotion, are not similarly limited. The negative consequences that can result when men mask their inner thoughts and feelings in order to not risk losing control or power in a relationship are explained by Derlega: "If...loving, including self-love, entails knowledge of the unique needs and characteristics of the loved person, men as well as women must be willing to incur the potential of being hurt" (1984, p. 7).

2. INTERDEPENDENCE

The ability for partners to share the responsibility for the emotional and physical well-being of the relationship is termed interdependence. To become interdependent, however, means one must cede some dependency needs and resist the lure to remain independent. The fear of the loss of one's individuality is referred to as the loss of the "me" within a relationship by Rubin (1983). For psychologist Goldhor Lerner we risk being engulfed by others when we have not sufficiently developed the 'self' that we bring to intimate relationships (1989, p. 53). And Hatfield argues that a potent risk of intimacy is the fear "that one would literally disappear as he or she lost himself (sic) in another" (1982, p. 212). In a culture that values so highly independence, we can begin to understand why men, especially, may be reluctant to give up a part of the self -- for their male identity is so strongly tied to their independence.

3. TRUST

Trust in the relationship and in one's partner is often qualified by the fear of betrayal. Knowledge is power. If individuals disclose intimate information about themselves, this information can be potentially damaging if revealed to others. Thus we become especially vulnerable when we reveal ourselves, particularly if we cannot trust fully that the information we impart will be guarded. If one does not risk being loved, then one does not risk being betrayed.

4. RECIPROCATED COMMITMENT

Studies conducted by sociologists (Blumstein and Schwartz, 1983; Hochschild, 1989) and psychologists (Duck, 1991; Hatfield, 1982) confirm repeatedly that healthy relationships between couples are more likely when each partner's commitment to the relationship is reciprocated. Yet,if one individual believes that he or she is more fully committed to a relationship, he or she may fear creating a power imbalance. For some individuals, if one partner is more vested in the relationship than the other, the potential exists for relinquishing power to the other. This power may be reflected through control of monetary resources, sexual behavior, emotional control, etc. Regardless of its source, however, such imbalances reflect inequity in relationships. It is difficult to sustain an intimate bond when both partners do not cherish equally the relationship.[3]

5. COMMUNICATION

Communication that is open and supportive is often mitigated by what we mean by the term itself. More than 20 years ago, George Simmons and J.L. McCall (1979) wrote that because conversations are a matter of both perception and interpretation, we are apt to impute to another person motives and feelings that reflect our own world-view rather than the actual intentions of the other party. As we will see in the next section, the expression and interpretation of listening behavior reflects women's and men's divergent styles of communication. These differences may create formidable barriers to intimacy.

INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN: THE EFFECT OF LISTENING

Purdy offers the following definition of listening:

> Listening is the active and dynamic process of attending, perceiving, interpreting, remembering, and responding to the expressed (verbal and nonverbal), needs, concerns, and information offered by other human beings.
>
> (1991, p. 11)

In an ideal world, where individuals share similar experiences, beliefs, ideas, goals, backgrounds, cultures, and so on, the process of listening would be a simple act.[4] We know, however, that our interactions with others are continually rife with misunderstandings.

Simmons and McCall allude to the role perception and interpretation play in the communication process. The connotative aspect of words is, in fact, a potential threat to intimacy (Beck, 1988, p. 22). Because individuals come to a communication exchange with their own zeitgeist, or view of the world, how an individual perceives or interprets the meaning of messages in a relationship has an enormous influence on how he or she will respond. Beck provides a cogent example: If one partner in a relationship equates a loud voice with rejection, then that individual may feel angered or hurt, or misunderstood when her partner raises his voice, regardless of how the partner intended the message. For Beck, then,the perceptions of the receiver of the message -- the listener -- are of at least equal importance to the message of the sender -- the speaker. His contention reflects the notion that there are indeed multiple realities to which individuals respond.

While we would argue for a multitude of factors affecting one's listening ability, we often overlook the obvious dimension of gender as a major contributor to listening style: to what is listened to, as well as to the expression of listening behavior. These differences often exacerbate problems in establishing, conveying, and sustaining intimate relationships. This section considers some of these differences and provides steps to diminish barriers.

Gender Identity and the Link to Men's and Women's Roles as Speakers and Listeners.

Elshtain (1982) traces the dichotomous climate of men as speakers and women as listeners to Greek antiquity. Women's language was regarded as the voice of opinion and not truth. This voice, consequently, was devalued and relegated to the home. Men's voices, in contrast, were valued. They could be heard in public.

More importantly, separating and valuing differently men's and women's communication made it increasingly difficult for the two sexes to converse:

> [W]omen's communications in classical antiquity would have taken on the terms of their enforced isolation. That one sex almost exclusively inhabited a public sphere and the other sex the private may help to explain why so many men and women literally could not "speak" to one another.
>
> (Elshtain, 1982, p. 130).

The implications for silencing a group based on gender has had an enormous impact on society's attitudes toward listening. Women were the purveyors of emotions; men, the arbiters of fact. One group was expected to listen; the other, to speak. The interpretation by external society of how and where women and men should communicate resulted in internalized social constructs. Speaking up and out became associated with intelligence, activity, independence, strength, and competitiveness. These traits, in turn, therefore became inexorably linked to men's sex-stereotyped behavior. Listening and polite speech became linked to passivity, weakness, connection, emotion, and compromise. These traits, in turn, became associated with women's sex-stereotyped roles.

Roles acquired centures ago are abundantly evident today. So pervasive are the gender roles of men as speakers and women as listeners, in fact, that they cross international boundaries. A comprehensive study by social psychologists Williams and Best (1982) revealed that in 30 nations these gender-linked communication stereotypes persist.

Self-concept influences, in turn, how we interact with others. If men are expected to play the dominant role of speakers, and to forge existences steeped in independence, while women are encouraged to subordinate their needs and desires as nurturers and listeners, then the desires and expectations each gender will have in defining, establishing, and maintaining intimacy with a member of the opposite sex will be affected.

Sadly, behind the conscious ego ideals of expected roles for each gender are what Keen calls the unconscious shadows (1991, pp. 44-45). Keen maintains that this discrepancy between the conscious ideal and unconscious shadow

"Inevitably shapes the dance between the genders" (p. 44, emphasis added). Like Lerner (1989) and Rubin (1983) before him, he refers to the dichotomy within women's and men's own psyches as well as their interrelationships as "the choreography of the relationship between the sexes that has dominated the last era of human history" (p. 44). Thus, behind the male warrior image of the independent, extroverted, protector/provider who is supposed to be brave, bold, practical and angry is a fragile human being who has been socialized to eschew feelings, nature and women. Similarly, behind the woman's image of the dependent, introverted nurturer who is supposed to heal, belong, be intuitive, passive, and emotional, is a strong human being who has been socialized to avoid power, anger, and men. By centering himself in the public, political sphere, man "has abandoned the familiar and domestic" (Keen, 1991, p. 44). By centering herself in the private, domestic sphere, woman "has abandoned the worldly and political" (Keen, 1991, p. 45).

Men and women have integrated all too well their functional roles as speakers and listeners, and perceived duties as active and passive members of society. These roles do not necessarily change when couples form intimate bonds. Because gendered behavior exerts such a powerful influence on how we interact, the potential exists for intimate partners not only to express listening cues differently, but to value differently this expression. A look at the expression and valuation of listening in intimate relationships follows.

The Expression and Interpretation of Listening in Intimate Relationships: A Matter of Gender.

If we do not expect women and men to speak and listen equally in our culture, how, then, can we expect them to attend equally to and to comprehend similarly the same cues? Duck reminds us that relationship satisfaction in intimate relationships is linked to communication: "Happily married couples talk to each other more than other couples do, convey the clear impression that they

understand the other person, show more sensitivity to their partner's feelings, and supplement their speech with a more expressive range of nonverbal signals" (1991, p. 116). In this own passage, Duck alludes to synchronicity, to the willingness to self-disclose, and to the willingness to "feel with" the other party -- that is, to listen empathically to one's partner.

If listening is so salient to relationship satisfaction, we should not be surprised to learn that the failure to listen fully to, or the perceived failure to listen to, one another is repeatedly cited as a cause of relationship distress. Seventy-seven percent of the 4,500 female respondents to Shere Hite's study on women and love, when asked "What does your partner do that makes you the maddest?" responded, "He doesn't listen." (1987). Another recent report on satisfaction between couples indicates that among the three major factors detrimental to relationships is the inability or unwillingness to listen (Winokur, 1991, p. 67). And Rubin (1983) attributes one source of marital conflict to women's perception that their husbands don't listen. One woman articulates the problem that echoes the works of other writers who address gender and intimacy: "He tunes out; I just can't believe how he can do that.... He has this amazing capacity to just stop being there. I mean, he's there, but he's not there " (p. 166).

Yet, if we recall Elshtain's (1982) and Kean's (1991) assertions that men and women have internalized a legacy relegating each gender to distinct communication needs and styles, we can begin to consider the problem of listening between intimate partners through a different lens: the lens of understanding.

Women and men have access to different kinds of expression. Men, we recall, are supposed to be the speakers. Aries (1987) in her work with college-age students found that men are more likely to reveal and to listen for facts while women gain closeness by talking about feelings. Men may learn from the role models in their lives that emotional vulnerability is unacceptable male behavior. Such knowledge follows them into their relationships with others.

In a fascinating study by Derlega and Chaikin (1976), these researchers found that women and men are regarded differently when they disclose personal problems. Derlega and Chaikin report that in male-male and/or male-female dyads, when a male stimulus person disclosed a personal problem, he was viewed more negatively than when he remained silent. (The image of the strong, silent type is evoked here.). The opposite results were obtained when female stimulus women were evaluated. It appears, then, that even if men want others to listen to their feelings and emotions, the negative assessment of such behavior would discourage them from doing so. Consequently, it is hard for men to divest themselves of the mantle of masculinity when they enter intimate relationships, for culture has taught them that others do not want to hear their feelings.

Just as society instructs men and women differently about what they should reveal, it also provides gender-specific training in how to listen. The literature on intimacy maintains the importance of perceived equal access to communication between partners. Yet the complaints of women and men in intimate relationships reveal that women, especially, believe they do not have equal access to the listening ear of their partner. Such perceived discrepancies may stem, in part, from how women view their role as the caretaker of relationships.

Women, as Gilligan (1982) and others have shown, attempt to reinforce connections and establish rapport through their communication with others (see also Belenky et al., 1986; Hall, 1982; Henley, 1977; Lakoff, 1975; Kramarae, 1981). Nonverbally, for example, women may demonstrate interest in their partner by using vocalizers or fillers. The problem in intimate couples occurs when men do not ostensibly reciprocate: "Men may be accused of listening too quietly when they fail to utter those sounds which, to women, indicate 'I am listening' (e.g., "Uh huh," "mm-hmmm," or, "I see")" (Borisoff and Merrill, 1991, p. 69).

Intimate partners demonstrate listening verbally as well. Yet the topics they choose and their styles of conversational maintenance often reflect powerful sex-role stereotypes. The following exchange exemplifies a typical problem between couples:

SHE: "I don't understand. Why can't he tell me he loves me!"

HE: "Of course I love her. I show her that I do. Why do I have to tell her!"

The relative value of listening for the couple is embedded in this brief exchange. For men, according to Helgeson et al. (1987), intimacy means doing things together. Thus, showing his partner should sufficiently demonstrate his love for her. For women, intimacy is connected to both the subject matter and time spent in conversation. Thus she needs to be told she is cherished.

This example is stereotypical, but typical as well of the kinds of communication that serve to distance couples and erect barriers to close relationships. Anthropologists Daniel Maltz and Ruth Borker (1982) found several differences in the communication styles of women and men that stem from socialization. Boys learn conversation around competitiveness and dominance while girls learn conversation around affiliation and equality. Men use questions to seek information while women may also use questions as they do fillers, that is, as a form of conversational maintenance. Men may be more uncomfortable with silence than are women. Their tendency, therefore, to speak in longer monologues may stem in part from this discomfort with silence rather than from solely the desire to dominate interaction. Finally, the different ways women and men show reassurance may be misinterpreted. For example, when women discuss problems and share experiences, the process of the discussion conveys empathic communication. In contrast, men may offer solutions to show they are listening empathically. The problem for intimate couples is that while women may offer what Tannen calls "the gift of understanding," and men "the gift of advice" (1990, p. 50), the opposite-sex partner in the

relationship may not regard "understanding" or "advice" as a gift.

Psychiatrist Aaron Beck attests eloquently to the problem couples experience due to different listening styles: "Partners are generally unaware of the power of this subtle aspect of marital conversation. But this ingredient laces their exchanges, even seemingly innocuous ones, with implicit meanings of respect, and affection -- or rejection, disrespect, and hostility" (1988, p. 75). While Maltz and Borker have documented extensively that women and men learn to express listening behavior differently, the end result for intimate couples is that each partner persists in interpreting the behavior of the other through the lens of gender. Women often accuse their partner of not listening when they say: "You're not listening!" Men often accuse their partner of not listening when they say: "You're not focusing on the problem!" More than likely what both partners mean when they artic .ate these words is "I'm not getting the response I wanted!" Being listened to essentially becomes a metaphor for being accepted, valued, and understood.

Perhaps instead of seeking appropriate metaphors that express women's and men's discontent, we need to take steps to decrease the barriers to intimate relationships that stem from women's and men's listening styles. To change the metaphor, we need to change reality. How to do so is the focus of our Conclusion.

CONCLUSION: FROM CHALLENGE TO CHANGE

Nearly 25 years ago, Dean Barnlund observed the value of being a truly open speaker and listener. Both stand to benefit from being open, honest, trusting, and empathic. By so doing, the speaker and listener can "extend their own perceptions of the world" (1968, cited 1979, p. 24). Moreover, Barnlund adds, speakers are enriched by being understood; listeners are enriched by being able to understand.

Clearly, Barnlund's words can be applied to men's and women's styles of listening within the context of intimate relationships. Given the barriers erected by gender roles, what can we do to facilitate change? We examine three strategies which, while they do not exhaust every avenue for developing good listening, are connected to the concept of intimacy.

1. Self-concept and listening to others.

One of the aforementioned barriers to intimacy is the fear that when others learn that we are less than perfect, they will reject us. Yet real closeness can not occur unless we do, in fact, accept who we are -- good traits and bad. According to Lerner, such closeness occurs "most reliably not when it is pursued or demanded in a relationship, but when both individuals work consistently on their own selves" (1989, p. 68). Women and men need to scrutinize societal expectations for being the 'perfect' man or woman and acknowledge that any proposed ideal is ephemeral. Only when we work on those traits that define who we are rather than on those that we think others might expect us to be can we begin to define the authentic self.

Furthermore, acceptance of self is basic to accepting others. Daly (1990) found in his work with women and men that individuals with a positive sense of self were able to listen more fully to others than were subjects with low self-esteem. High self-esteem subjects talked less about themselves, employed more conversational maintenance cues ("I see," "Go on," etc.), and, recalled more about their previous conversations with others. The ability for intimate couples to accept and validate others contributes to relationship satisfaction. Accepting others and encouraging their self-expression reflects a true gift of love. This gift can be given only when women and men are able truly to enter the frame of reference of their partners, but we cannot gift our partners with acceptance and validation until we have learned to accept and value ourselves.

2. Learning the Listening Strategies of the Other.

Although couples may be willing to enter the frame of reference of their partners, to do so they first must understand the other's perspective. Men must learn to listen with a feminine ear; women must learn to listen from the masculine perspective. A major barrier to entering the other's perspective stems, in part, from the previously held assumption that those who share a linguistic community also share a speech community. Thus, it was largely assumed that women and men spoke the same, only men did it better; and, women and men listened equally, only women were better at it. A legacy of research indicates that this assumption may not be true. While men and women may assign the same literal meanings to words and expressions (as members of the same linguistic community), as members of distinct speech communities they hold divergent interpretations of these same words and expressions (Gumperz, 1962; Reik, 1954).

It is important to bring these differences to consciousness: While women and men may hear the same message, they may listen to the message differently. We need to approach gendered communication with the same sensitivity and openness with which we embrace intercultural communication. Aries (1987) suggests, in fact, that women and men should employ code-switching in their communication -- that is, that each sex should learn to move comfortably within the expression of the other. By sharing communication strategies, we can move "from a greater valuation of male behavior to a more equal valuation of male and female behavior" (1987, p. 167). Not only do women and men both stand to gain as more proficient communicators, but by more fully understanding each other's communication, couples have a greater opportunity for leading personally fulfilling lives.

3. Serving as Listening Role Models.

It seems a simple matter: Women will learn how men communicate; men will embrace the feminine style of communication. This will not come easily, however, for our culture remains a strongly patriarchal system; women's expression remains

devalued. If we have any hope for intimate couples to learn how to listen fully to one another, listening cannot be 'demanded.' Rather, listening training must begin early on, in an environment where children have two parents who can provide nurturance and serve as positive role models. In this way, Rubin tells us, "For both, self and gender would be less rigidly and stereotypically defined and experienced -- the artificial distinctions we now hold between masculine and feminine swept away by early childhood experiences that would permit the internalization of the best of both in all of us" (1983, p. 166).

The best of both: In such a community, women and men would be equally valued as communicators. They would, in Habermas' words, participate in an exchange where "domination is absent; and reciprocity pertains between and among participants" (cited in Elshtain, 1982, p. 144). We do not kid ourselves that learning reciprocity is difficult. Faust and Luste, after all, were unable to overcome their differences. And Faust, tempted by the emotional side but unable to overcome his socialization as a vessel of intellect and reason, fell into such a state of despair that he committed suicide. But he was, after all, a literary figure fixed in a moment in time. We have progressed beyond that time, and now have the knowledge and the tools to relegate accusations, unfulfilled longings and complaints about the listening behaviors of our partner to the past. We no longer need kill ourselves in despair, nor kill our relationships in ignorance.

NOTES

1. Recent textbooks on interpersonal communication do include chapters on intimacy. For works that integrate the literature on intimacy, gender and interpersonal communication specifically, see Interpersonal communication strategies: Gateway to premature intimacy (Borisoff and Hahn, 1991) and Dimensions of intimacy: The effect of gender (Borisoff, in press).

2. Although the authors who write on intimate relationships acknowledge that there are many different kinds of intimate relationships (e.g., married couples, parent-child, friendship ties, gay and lesbian couples, etc.), the majority of the research on intimacy has, to this point, been conducted on heterosexual couples who are married. Because part of the purpose of this paper is to integrate the research on gender differences and human communication, extant research on intimacy and communication was used. This research addresses primarily heterosexual relationships.

3. Arlie Hochschild's The Second Shift (1989) speaks eloquently to this point. It must be noted that equity and equality in relationships are often a matter of perception. Hochschild demontrates in her case studies how partners in a marriage will often reframe their definition and expectations for equality in the home in order to maintain a viable marriage.

4. Purdy offers one definition for listening. Other definitions can be found as well in the following texts on listening: Brownell (1986), Glenn (1989), Steil et al. (1983), Wolf et al. (1983), and Wolvin and Coakley (1991).

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